



Aylesbury High School

Parents' & Students' Newsletter: October 2015

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What do they do at school all day?

A recent tour of the school revealed a great deal going on. Here are some examples of the topics and activities during just one lesson:

Acid anhydrides, ammonia, Atticus, boots, calculus, carrot cake, cats and dogs, evacuees, Franz, friendships, Gantt charts, grief, hockey, inherited diseases, jargon, jewellery, Klein, leaders, minus and plus number rules, Nebulae, new life, oxygen, percussion, periodic table and protons, PJs, quiz, ranch workers, scalar products, schizophrenia, slapstick, trailers, verbs, vectors, volleyball and Wuthering Heights, with little or no evidence of x, y or zzz's in the lessons!



If you count them, there are well over a million hours of learning every year at AHS. While I definitely hope that our students learn quite a lot, I also hope that they enjoy their lessons and everything else that goes on at AHS this year.

Alan Rosen

Alan Rosen

2015 Exam Results

We were delighted by the GCSE and A Level results this year, both the headline statistics and, more importantly, the individual success stories.

The headlines were:

- Year 11
 - 36% A* and 36% A grades
 - Average grade A
 - 36 students with 8 or more A* grades, 110 students with 8 or more A grades
 - 40 AS results (average B grade)
 - Highest results in Biology, Chemistry, English Literature, Maths, Food, Geography, History, RS, Textiles, Thinking & Reasoning Skills

- Year 13
 - 20% A* grades and 33% A grades
 - Average grade halfway between A and B
 - 16 students with 3 A* or better
 - 52 students with 3 A or better
 - Highest results in Art, Biology, English Lit and Lang/Lit, French, Geography, Italian, Further Maths, Physics, World Development
 - University entrance went very well

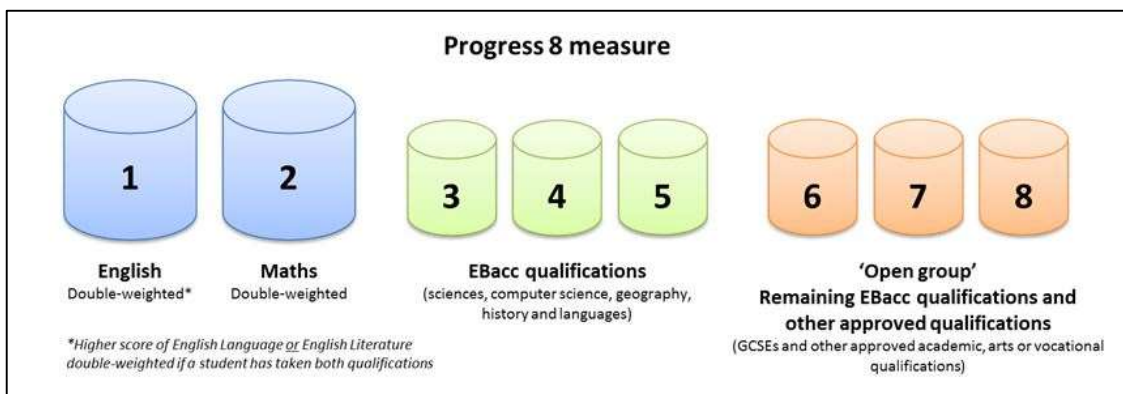
During the Autumn Term we do a lot of work analysing the results, seeing what went well and what we can improve. Meanwhile, the government looks across the country and produces measures of relative performance, with performance tables published later in the year.

For many years, the main indicator of performance at Key Stage 4 has been the 5+A*-C GCSE measure; the percentage of students in a school who get at least five higher grades. This isn't a great challenge for us and tells parents and Ofsted very little about how we have done, and some of the other measures don't tell the public a great deal even if they are useful to schools.



From next year, there is a new measure being introduced nationally called Progress 8. This is calculated by looking at eight GCSE results for each student (see below for the rather complicated way to determine which results to use – students have to fill the respective 'buckets' with their results), and seeing how they have done compared with other students who ended Key Stage 2 with the same results. Averaging every student's progress across the year group gives the Progress 8 score which says whether the school is adding value (eg +0.2 of a grade for each result) or subtracting value (eg -0.3 of a grade for each result). Ofsted have said that any school which has a P8 result of -0.5 or lower 'may come under scrutiny through inspection'.

I am very pleased to report that, provisionally, **our students achieved 0.6 of a grade higher for each GCSE than if they had attended the mythical 'average school'**; this is excellent and really recognises the hard work of staff and students, and shows the value that we have added to our students.



Eureka! (finally)

Since Easter we have had builders on site and most of the Science labs have been out of use. The work has involved:

- Completely renovating seven labs and one other classroom
- Replacing the whole block's windows and curtain walling
- Replacing the block's roof
- Creating a corridor upstairs to vastly improve the 'traffic flow'
- Replacing the block's water supply
- Installing air handling equipment for the chemistry labs to enable proper air extraction
- Re-furbishing the prep room, adding a chemical store
- Re-numbering the labs in a logical way at last (!)



At the same time, the windows on one side of the Main Hall and on both sides of the Dining Room have been replaced (the other side of the Main Hall was done a few years' ago), greatly improving both spaces, especially in the winter.

This work has not been cheap and we have encountered slightly more than our fair share of challenges during construction. The overall project has cost around £1.5 million, funded largely through the generosity of past and present parents, supplemented by a government grant that we successfully bid for and a



grant from the Wolfson Foundation. We are very grateful to everyone who has contributed to *Building a Brighter Future* and hope to be able to invite all donors to an opening ceremony in the not-too-distant future.



Staff and students have obviously experienced a great deal of disruption to their science lessons and I would like to thank them for how well they have coped with the less-than-ideal facilities. The new labs have been very well received and are a vast

improvement over their predecessors. Obviously, the work is not simply to make the labs nicer; ultimately the aim is to help all of our students become even better scientists, whether or not they want to pursue scientific studies beyond GCSE and A Levels.



When we were planning the project it became apparent that we couldn't afford to include the final lab in the works (the old S11, now called S17) and that's a focus for fundraising now. In the next month or so, please look out for a communication which invites parents to contribute to our future developments; we can only continue to move the school forward with your help.



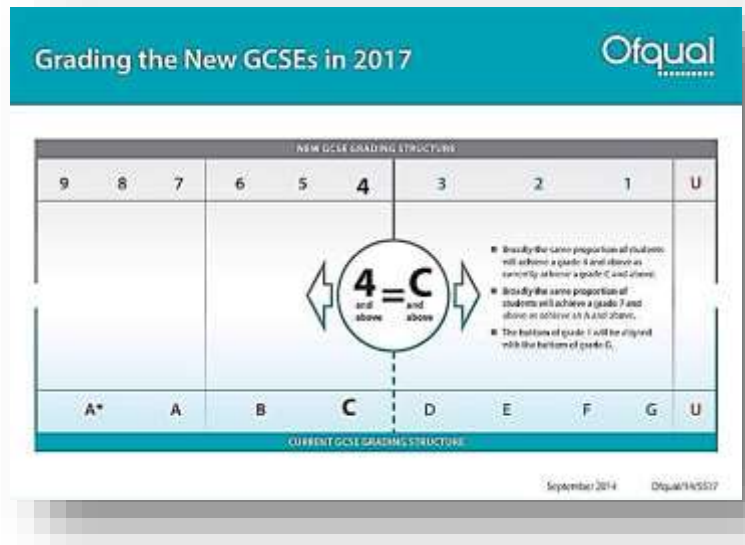
Assessment Without Levels (but maybe with grades)

For almost three decades, primary and secondary schools have tracked progress using National Curriculum levels and then GCSE grades. The system has not been perfect but it did at least give a common language. Critics said that the levels encouraged too much focus on the numbers (“she’s achieved a 4c”) rather than an understanding of what has been learnt and what needs to be learnt next.

The government’s response to the criticism has been to abolish levels completely. Primary and secondary schools are now adopting a range of assessment methods and a concern is that it will be harder for students changing schools (and for parents with children in more than one school) to understand the various approaches. Despite that, everyone should welcome the emphasis on ‘deep learning’ and ‘mastery’ which means not simply doing something once to be awarded a level.

At the same time, GCSE grades are moving from A*-G to 9-1. This diagram shows that it’s not as simple as a G turning into a 1 etc; the bottom four grades are changing to just three while the top four grades turn into six. Year 10 have commenced their English and Maths GCSEs using the new structure; Year 9 will be using it next year for the majority of their GCSEs.

AHS has been working on ‘Assessment Without Levels’ for a year now (with Mr Baird and Mrs Hamnett taking the lead) and we have consulted widely on possible ways forward. We have decided to use the 9-1 grading system from Year 7 upwards so there is a common approach all the way to the end of Year 11, and it has now been introduced for Years 7-9.



It’s worth emphasising that, although this is a big change for all of us, it does not affect what we teach or how we teach, so please don’t worry that we are in completely uncharted territory; hopefully teachers will find the new system coherent and manageable, students will have a better understanding of what they have learnt and what they need to do next, and parents will get a reasonable picture of progress over the years.

A few cautionary points (especially for Year 7-9 students and parents):

- Don’t expect equal grades across the different subjects
- Targets neatly assume regular progress every term/year but students don’t progress in straight lines!
- Always look beyond the grade to see what it’s telling you about what has been learnt

Money makes the world go round

A quick update on school funding. The government is likely to announce its intentions for funding education on 25 November as part of the Spending Review. It is very unlikely that any more money will be available overall but there has been a lot of work done on a National Funding Formula which would get rid of some of the unfairness between local authorities. Meanwhile, Bucks has taken action to reform its Schools Forum, the body which recommends how schools are funded in Bucks, and resolved to improve its operation. Schools Forum is starting to understand why schools are so poorly funded in Bucks, partly by benchmarking spending decisions against similar authorities, but still has some way to go before it is able to allocate money according to principles and evidence. Whether any of this gives AHS what we would believe to be a fair allocation remains to be seen but at least politicians, local authority officers and schools are now much more aware of the way funding has been operating.

2016-17 School Improvement Plan

Each year we draw up our 'to-do' list, in consultation with parents, students, staff and the Governors. With so many changes in education and pressures from all directions, it is important that we prioritise the items which will have most effect on our students and make sure we are determining our direction rather than simply being driven by external changes.

As you will see, there is a lot to do! Some of the items are in jargon – apologies for that – but hopefully you will get the flavour of how we would like to develop and improve the school over the coming year.

<p>TL1: Quality of Teaching & Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Teams focus on 80/20, use of data, sharing good practice, plus... b New lesson observation pro forma c Smarter Marking d Effective Homework 	<p>TL2: Curriculum Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Course changes in most subjects b Post-16 changes Yr 2 by Nov 2015 c Review Key Stage 4 by Dec 2015 d Review Key Stage 3 by Dec 2015 	<p>TL3: Data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Adopt 9-1 b Introduce FFT Aspire c Staff training to ensure confidence and consistent use
<p>TL4: ICT in the Classroom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Develop Google tools and apps b Promote Flipped Learning c Develop website use d Look at increasing provision of tablets/iPads etc 	<p>TL5: Outreach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Increase inter-school co-operation b Partner primary school projects c Extend international links: China? 	<p>TL6: Developing Students'...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a ...confidence in public speaking [Cabinet project] b ...careers provision c ...resilience: continue Penn Resilience Prog and evaluate impact
<p>P1: RIFT Year 2 (RIFT = Right First Time)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Teams to focus on RIFT b School systems (esp reports) to be less onerous for everyone c Care of the premises 	<p>P2: CPD to focus on...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Form Tutors' effectiveness (revised job description) b Smarter working c Leadership d Pastoral/SEN/EAL awareness e J2O [promoting outstanding teaching] f ICT incl. Google Classroom and mobile devices 	<p>P3: Consider Teaching School Status</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Run ~3 inter-school activities to establish links and level of need b Prepare a business case
<p>R1: ICT Systems Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a New Internet connection & filtering b More on-line services incl. SIMS at home c Staff teams to organise on-line and networked resources d More tablets? e Improved wireless network 	<p>R2: Strategic Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Determine AHS long-term educational and financial position: Govs/LT planning day Oct 2015 b Look at staffing structures c Consider fund-raising focus d Do a full analysis of premises sufficiency, suitability and condition 	<p>Aylesbury High School Improvement Plan 2015/16</p>

Safety on site

We continue to have problems with parents driving onto the school site at the start and end of the day, often claiming that their one entry won't do any harm. There are signs displayed asking that parents (and taxis) do not try to come onto the site at busy times as it causes congestion and creates a hazard for anyone on foot. Also, a plea to those on foot to be alert for traffic – and walking across car parks and roads with headphones on seems to prevent pedestrians noticing any traffic.



Safety and being good citizens off site

We have had proposals for improving the traffic flow and parking in Turnfurlong for some time but it has been rather frustrating that the necessary works haven't been carried out yet. Local consultations have been held and I believe that the works are awaiting the go-ahead and an allocation of funds to pay for them. If and when they happen, there will be better protection for the houses of local residents who suffer from thoughtless parking both during the day (members of the public who park there to avoid charges in the town centre *and* our students) and in the evening (parents attending school functions). Can I ask that everyone parking in Turnfurlong makes sure that they are parked both legally and thoughtfully?

Also in and around Turnfurlong, we have had a number of complaints from local residents about litter being dropped and general behaviour, so a plea to everyone who walks down local roads to treat them at least as well as you would your own road/street/avenue, and to let us know of anyone you see who is acting improperly.

Linking with China in 2016

We have been offered a fantastic opportunity to host a number of Chinese students for much of the Summer Term 2016. They would join Year 7 and Year 8 classes for most lessons with the aim of improving their (already quite good) English and gaining an understanding of our culture. In return, we can expect them to enhance our understanding of China and Chinese culture. They are likely to be from a school in Jiangsu Province in Western China, near to Shanghai, provisionally with ten to a dozen girls and the same number of boys, so we are running the visit in co-operation with Aylesbury Grammar School.



We will be looking for families who would be willing to host the Chinese visitors next summer and will be holding an AHS/AGS joint Information Evening on **Tuesday 24 November at 7pm, at AHS**. Look out for further details shortly after the half term holiday but do consider whether you would like to get involved with an unusual and really enriching experience. We will circulate some FAQs ahead of the meeting but it is probably worth saying that hosting is open to older years as well as Years 7 and 8, and a payment is made to cover the living expenses for each host family.

Next year's GCSE and A Level Options



Years 9 and 11 are already thinking about options for next September and so are we! We are currently reviewing the curriculum models for both Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form in the light of the second phase of revised GCSEs and A Levels which start in 2016.

For Year 9, the Options Booklet will be available in February 2016, with the Options Evening on Monday 24 February. For Year 11, I will explain the options in an assembly early in November and then there is the Sixth Form Information Evening on Wednesday 25 November.

Much Ado About Nothing

Aylesbury Grammar School &
Aylesbury High School
present

A NEW ABRIDGEMENT OF
**MUCH ADO
ABOUT NOTHING**
BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Wednesday 4th November – Friday 6th November 2015 at 7 pm
Aylesbury Grammar School Foundation Hall
Tickets: £8
Available from your ParentPay account
Your receipt acts as your ticket for entry
For further details contact:
office@ags.bucks.sch.uk or office@ahs.bucks.sch.uk

The first week back after half term is School Production week so remember to buy your tickets now!

The joint production this year is an original abridgement of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*. The school production will be performed in the AGS Foundation Hall 4th – 6th November 2015 at 7pm. Tickets for this event are priced at £8 and are available through Parent Pay. Your ParentPay receipt will also act as the ticket for the event so please print a copy to show on the door.

This will be the third Shakespeare abridgement created by Mr Warner and if the past productions of *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Macbeth* are anything to go by then this production of *Much Ado* will be highly entertaining and accessible. As well as being a showcase for the considerable acting and technical skills of our pupils the production this year also boasts an original score written by AGS's Will Farmer (Hampden 13) and professionally recorded by our 6th formers.

Term Dates 2015-16 - reminder

Please note that these are not necessarily the same as other schools.



Term	First day of term	Half Term	Last day of term	Other days to note
Autumn 2015	Thursday 3 September	Monday 26 – Friday 30 October	Friday 18 December	INSET 1: Tuesday 1 September INSET 2: Wednesday 2 September INSET 3: Friday 9 October
Spring 2016	Tuesday 5 January	Monday 15 – Friday 19 February	Thursday 24 March	INSET 4: Monday 4 January
Summer 2016	Monday 12 April	Monday 30 May – Friday 3 June	Wednesday 20 July	INSET 5: Monday 11 April Bank Holiday: Monday 2 May

Term Dates 2016-17 - provisional

Term	First day of term	Half Term	Last day of term	Other days to note
Autumn 2016	Monday 5 September	Monday 24 – Friday 28 October	Friday 16 December	INSET 1: Thursday 1 September INSET 2: Friday 2 September INSET 3: Friday 7 October
Spring 2017	Wednesday 4 January	Monday 13 – Friday 17 February	Friday 31 March	INSET 4: Tuesday 3 January
Summer 2017	Tuesday 18 April	Monday 29 May – Friday 2 June	Friday 21 July	INSET 5: Tuesday 18 April Bank Holiday: Monday 1 May

The Giving Machine

Are you doing any on-line purchasing this autumn? If so, could you spend a couple of minutes registering at

www.thegivingmachine.co.uk?

Companies such as Amazon, John Lewis, W H Smith and M&S will all make a donation to the AHSA, at no cost to you, if you go via The Giving Machine to buy anything.

To date we have raised £2000 in this completely pain-free way so please do sign up before you reach for your credit/debit cards!

AHSA AGM

The Aylesbury High School Association will be having their Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 10 November at 7pm in the School Library. Do come along and see what we have been up to and how we have spent the money raised. Please contact Sue Hartley, the Chair, via the School Office, if you need more information.



A Message From our new Chair of Governors: Mr Arfan Chaudhry

As a proud parent of a daughter who is studying for her A Levels at AHS, I am delighted to have been appointed Chair of Governors for Aylesbury High School, succeeding Cindy Bull who has done such a great job as Chair; I would like to thank her for her leadership and am very pleased that she will continue to serve on the Governing Body.

I have served as Deputy Chair for four years and in that period I have seen a number of changes in the school; including consistently impressive academic results and sports achievements, the move to Academy status, a very successful Ofsted visit and two fundraising campaigns - the first leading to the new Sixth Form Block and more recently the Building a Brighter Future campaign which has given us a completely refurbished Science Block.

The Governing Body has 19 Governors who are responsible for the overall direction and performance of the school. We come from all walks of life and are drawn from the parent body by election as well as having representatives from the local community and our staff. Together we aim to bring a breadth of experience and expertise to the development of the school and oversight of the delivery of education to its pupils.

I, and my fellow Governors, support the school in a number of ways and regularly attend the music and dance concerts, school plays, consultation, open and certificate evenings as well as the year-end Presentations mornings. We formally meet every half term as a full governing body and are supported by 3 sub-committees; Personnel, Resources and Teaching & Learning that effectively provide the strategic direction for the school, monitor the School Improvement Plan and review and update school policies.

As a Governing Body we act for the school as a whole – pupils, parents, carers, teachers and support staff. Our remit is primarily strategic in nature whilst the operational running of the school is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the senior staff. I look forward to discussing the challenges and opportunities the school faces and would welcome your views and comments on how we can improve the school for your daughters. As part of that process the Governing Body and School Leadership team work closely to develop, implement and monitor the School Improvement Plan.

We are currently inviting applications for the role of Parent Governor and are seeking two individuals who have a passion for education and performance improvement across all aspects of the school including the support functions. We are looking for individuals with the ability to balance "critical" and "friend" who can work as a part of our team, challenging and supporting the school's Headteacher and his management team. If you are considering applying please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss the key role a Parent Governor plays in supporting the school. I and my fellow Governors hope to be regular contributors to the Parents' & Students' Newsletter and will aim to update you on our work.

Arfan Chaudhy

Chair of Governors

achaudhry@ahs.bucks.sch.uk

www.ahs.bucks.sch.uk/about-the-school/governors/

Parent Governor Elections

We are inviting nominations for Parent Governors as we have two vacancies to fill this term.

A Governing Body's overriding responsibility is to work in partnership with the Headteacher to promote continuous improvement in the performance of the school. This involves the establishment of an improvement plan, the setting of challenging but achievable targets and the interpretation of information to assess progress and determine appropriate action. Typically, a governor's duties will average up to 6 hours of spare time each month and each Governor serves on two of the three sub-committees; Teaching & Learning, Personnel and Resources. As well as its improvement role, the Governing Body is there to be a 'critical friend' who can provide the right balance between supporting and challenging the performance of both the Headteacher and the school.

Being a Parent Governor can be stimulating, enjoyable and rewarding. If you have the enthusiasm and desire to become closely involved in the running of the school then please do consider putting yourself forward. Parent Governors are an important component in achieving an effective and well-balanced governing body. We are keen to recruit parents and carers coming from 'all walks of life' and representing all groups in our school community. You can find out more about the role by contacting the Headteacher or Chair of Governors via the main school telephone number or emailing secretary@ahs.bucks.sch.uk. There is very good training and support which we purchase from the Bucks Learning Trust.

Parents/carers who are nominated for election must be proposed and seconded in writing, with nominations being signed by the proposer and seconder; the person nominated must also state in writing that he or she is willing to stand for election. Those eligible to stand are the parents or carers of students who are currently registered at this school. The proposer and seconder must also have a daughter currently in attendance at the school.

The term of office is for a period of four years. A parent/carer whose daughter leaves the school may continue as a Parent Governor until the end of their term of office, if he or she so wishes.

Nominations should be made on the next page, on or before the closing date for nominations which is **3.30pm on Monday 2 November**. In the event that more nominations than vacancies are received then a ballot will be held.

The ballot will be entirely secret and a further letter about the arrangements will be sent to you. All parents/carers whose child/children attend this school will be entitled to vote in the postal ballot and voting will be on the basis of one vote per parent/legal guardian per place available.

If it proves impossible to fill all vacancies, the Governing Body has the right to make an appointment/s in order to fill the required number of Parent Governor places on the Governing Body. If the need to do this arises, the Governing Body would first of all consider appointing a parent/carer who has a daughter on roll at the school but, if they could not make an appointment, they would consider a person who was a parent/carer of a school-aged child but not necessarily a registered student at this school.

Please note that Governors will be required to produce evidence of identity and make a formal declaration of any convictions incurred, including any that have become spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act. All Governors will be checked against the ISA First list (the list of people barred by the government from working in schools) and, in common with staff working in school, will be asked to obtain a DBS disclosure (previously a Criminal Records Bureau check).

The Governing Body comprises:

- 7 Parent Governors
- 5 Community Governors
- 3 Co-opted Governors
- 3 Staff Governors, elected by staff at the school
- The Headteacher

A full list of the names of the School Governors will be available as soon as the appointments have been finalised.

Please do consider whether you could put yourself forward, or nominate someone else, to play an active part in shaping the future of AHS.

Please print and return in a sealed envelope marked Parent Governor to the school office, by 3.30 pm on Monday 2 November 2015.

NOMINATION

I wish to nominate for the position of Parent Governor.
PLEASE PRINT

Name of Nominee’s child/ren at AHS	
------------------------------------	--

Proposer’s name	<small>PLEASE PRINT</small>	
Name of Proposer’s child/ren at AHS		
Proposer’s signature		

Secunder’s name	<small>PLEASE PRINT</small>	
Name of Secunder’s child/ren at AHS		
Secunder’s signature		

NOMINEE’S ACCEPTANCE

I am prepared to accept this nomination DATE.....

(Nominee’s signature)

If you would like to nominate someone but are unable to print this form, please contact Mrs Hilary Osgerby, Head’s PA, at secretary@ahs.bucks.sch.uk or telephone 01296 388222, and a paper copy will be sent home with your daughter.

In the event of an election, candidates will be asked to provide information about themselves and/or an election address of up to 200 words, for distribution to parents.